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W. W. Dixon

Winnsboro, S. C. 390571 NINA RABB CASTLES

(WHITE) 80 YEARS OLD.

Mrs. Nina R. Castles, widow of the late Warren P. Castles, lives with her daughter, Janie, on the southwest corner of Liberty and Crawford Streets, in the town of Winnsboro, Fairfield County, South Carolina. In comparison with resident and property owners in the locality, she is wealthy and well connected socially.

“I am here all alone, with the exception of ny cook in the kitchen, so I will just make home folks of you and ask you into the dining room where there is a fire. Take a chair near the table and use it as your writing desk. Put yourself at ease and let me know what will interest you. I received your phone call and am only partially enlightened as to the object of your proposed interview.

“I was born February 5th, 1858, on my father's plantation about six miles west of Winnsboro. My father was John Glazier Rabb, and my mother was Nancy Kincaid Rabb. Father died in 1872; mother in 1900. They are both buried in the graveyard of the old historic 'Brick Church' on the banks of Little River in this county.

“My father and mother had a large family of children. I'll try to tell you a little about each one. John, the eldest, never married. He was killed in the great War of Secession while carrying the flag of the 6th Regiment at the battle of Gaines Mill, Virginia, June 30, 1862. In carrying the colors on this occasion, General Bratton afterward said of him: 'He advanced onward and onward with a stride unnaturally steady. None who saw it can ever forget the splendid picture 2 presented by that glorious and handsome boy, John Rabb, on that occasion. Our line poured on behind him, wave over wave, through obstructions, and,

coming up to the colors in his steady hand, we continued the advance until we had swept over the enemy's line of battle.' My brother, Horace, carries the gold watch that John carried the day that he was killed.

“James Kincaid Rabb, the next boy, was wounded at Petersburg, Virginia, but he lived through the war, married, and reared a family. He died June 5, 1908, and was buried with Confederate honors at Seattle, Washington. William Clarence Rabb was in the 2d. Regiment, but he lived on till August, 1929. Virginia Rabb died at the age of ten years. Edwin Belzer died at the age of eight. Jessie May Rabb married Rev. W. H. Millen, D. D., and had three children. She died in Rosemark, Tenn. Horace Rabb married Mary Walker. He is a retired A.R.P. preacher living at Due West, S. C. He is the source of much of the information I am giving you this morning. He is three years older than I. I, Nina, am the eighth child. Charley K. Rabb born 1860 married Elizabeth Province, daughter of Col. David Province. An infant born July 16, 1864, died a few months before Sherman raided our home.

“My father was fifty-two years old and I was about seven when the Yankees came through our section of the county. He was a successful farmer and slave-holder, and had stored up large quantities of cotton, meat, corn, molasses, wheat, oats, and other farm produce on the plantation. He had at this time eight mules, five mares, a herd of cows, droves of hogs, and flocks of sheep, ducks, geese, turkeys, guineas, peafowls, and chickens. Yet, when the armies and camp followers of Sherman passed through, not one of all these - think of it - not one of all these were left on the place! I remember an old bob-tailed horse, a superannuated 3 carriage horse returned three days after the Yankees left. How glad the slaves and I were to see old Bob! Old Bob, however, was passed past his working days. The Yankees found it out and he was not wanted by them; so they turned him loose to wander back home. They didn't leave one pound of meat, meal, flour, nor molasses, except a small amount that had been buried in a box in a hole in the slave graveyard on the farm.

“The house furnishings were destroyed or taken away, and the only bed-clothes saved were those on mine and Charley's beds; we were, supposedly, sick with measles. The members of the family were not left a change of clothing. The gin-house and twenty-five bales of cotton were burned in my father's sight. The large barn and a log house on the opposite side of the farm escaped destruction. Army wagons had hauled corn from them. Perhaps other wagons expected to come and carry off the remainder and then set the buildings afire, but none returned. From the remainder of that corn, my father supplied many neighbors. Since the gristmills had been destroyed and no meal could be ground, our family and others subsisted on lye hominy for a long time.

“In spite of all this ill treatment, my mother kept her poise and peace of heart in the deep resources of her faith in God and the Christian religion. She said, 'In spite of it all, we are not to cherish ill feelings toward the people of the North.' And I can truthfully say that I have lived to make many dear friends of families whose forebears fought that the Union might be preserved.

“My mother was a woman of energy and good judgment. She was a skilled weaver and seamstress. During the war, she operated and directed a number of sewing machines, which turned out many yards of cloth that were sewed into garments. She often worked a loom with her hands and feet. When jute bagging became scarce, she conceived the idea of making bagging from the inner bark of the 4 poplar trees. Water was dammed up on a branch, and long green poplar poles were cut and submerged into the water until the bark could be easily removed. The inner bark was then peeled off and wound into balls, from which shuttles were filled. Hundreds of yards of bagging were thus secured to wrap the lint cotton into bales.

“Mother also engaged in the silk industry. She raised silk worms and obtained silk from their cocoons. My brother and I had the task of gathering mulberry leaves in the woods

for these worms. I can see my mother now, in my mind, with cocoons in a vessel of tepid water slowly winding off the silk. From the silk thus obtained, she made silk mitts.

“Our slave quarters were in sight of our residence. They were arranged in two rows of houses, with a well kept street or wagon path between the two rows. They were frame buildings with rock chimneys, and they had blinds to close the apertures or windows. The carpenters made each household of slaves sufficient and efficient bedsteads. The bedding was made of wheat straw and the pillows of cotton. Cotton quilts were used on the beds in summer and coarse wool blankets in winter. We fed the slaves well, and a spirit of affectionate care existed upon the part of the owners for the slaves, and a spirit of respect and faithful service prevailed on the part of the slaves towards the occupants of 'the big house.' Our slaves had the same physician our family had, and they received attentive nursing. Doses of medicine were accurately measured and duly administered to them. Prayers were conducted among them, and the older ones were taken to church on the Sabbath.

“I had a governess in our home, a Miss Harriett Betreville from Charleston, who taught me in my girlhood. She was in the home when the Yankees came to the house. Our hams had been salted and smoked in the dirt smokehouse that prevailed 5 in slavery time on all plantations of any size. We had taken fifty hams and suspended them in the attic of our home. They soon ferreted them out. The Yankees came in squads and would go up and come down with them in the transportation. As the last ham was thus being carried out, Miss Betreville, with an old maid's sternness and precision, seized the ham that was in the hands of the soldier and said loudly, 'You shall not have the last one.' The soldier hesitated and then laughingly relinquished it to her hands.

“You asked about the dress style in those days and how much material was used in a single dress? I think it was from fourteen to sixteen yards, depending somewhat upon the pattern of the dress and the size of the lady. Yes, we wore wire hoops. They were slipped over the head and the petticoats and dress came on afterward. When a lady sat

down, she was careful to arrange her skirts and press both hands down on the front of the hoop to prevent the untoward results of its flying upward and carrying the skirts along with it. Well, it looked mighty pretty while standing and walking, but it took some education, refinement, finement, and experience to get away with the mode in a crowded reception room. One never wore them while horseback riding. The long riding skirt was the vogue for equestrians.

“I wonder what has become of the old Barthrop sewing machine? This was a pedal sewing machine antedating the Wheeler and Wilson. It was larger and was boxed. It had folding doors to the inside mechanism.

“How did the term 'smokehouse' originate? This was the meat house. It had a dirt floor. The meat was suspended from cross pieces arranged therein. Fires were built on the dirt floor under the hanging sides, shoulders, and hams of meat, and in that way the meat was smoked and cured. The house derived its name from the method of smoking and curing the meat. During and after the 6 war, salt became so scarce and valuable that the dirt floors were scraped and the soil boiled, and in this way, salt seasoning in small quantities was obtained for use.

“There were quilting parties, sewing bees, and candy pulls among us during the war. In 1872, our family moved to Due West, S. C., and one month afterward, Feb. 20, 1872, my father, John Glazier Rabb, died. We came back to Winnsboro, to live on the old plantation, and my mother died there, April 11, 1900. Both are buried in the Old Brick Church graveyard, on Little River.

“I married Warren Preston Castles in 1892. We have been blessed with three children. Clazier, lives at Great Falls, S. C. Nancy married Herbert Young and lives at Kershaw, S. C. Janie is not married; she lives with me and teaches school on the border line of Fairfield and Richland Counties. We still own the old home in the country, and we try to keep it up. We own and live in this town residence.

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“You must call again and bring some of your friends and have some music on that sweet-toned old piano over there. I have a radio but it is not altogether what I long for. I want company - young people - girls who can play and men and boys who can sing the old songs like 'Silver Threads Among the Gold,' 'In the Gloaming,' and 'Juanita,' and some comic ones like 'Cushion Bend' and 'Susan Jane.' I find myself at times wishing to hear the old songs rather than the new ones on the radio. Bring some young people to see me.”